

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HORACE M. ALBRIGHT TRAINING CENTER
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ENTRANCE STATION OPERATION

The entrance stations of our national parks provide one of the most important points of contact for visitors with Service personnel in the entire System. This is the portal through which the visitor passes into a new environment and experience. It may be the visitor's only contact with a Service representative and consequently it is a most important one. It can be easily seen that this initial meeting between ranger and visitor will greatly influence the visitor in his estimate of the park and the National Park Service as a whole.

What are the things that will influence the visitor?

1. The entrance station and its environment

A neat well-maintained area is of utmost importance. Buildings painted and in good repair. Windows washed and clean. Flagpole painted. Halyard pulled tight and a bright flag flying. Lawns, if present, mowed and neatly trimmed. Trash picked up. Traffic lane striping in good condition. Signs in good repair and only applicable signs posted. Review critically requests for new signs--do they merely add clutter to the station? Can they be read by the person driving up to the station?

2. The station's interior

The same degree of orderliness expected outside the station should prevail inside. Folders, trash bags, etc., neatly stored, files maintained and up to date, desks uncluttered, no commercial radios blaring, floors kept clean, windows washed, furniture dusted.

3. The Ranger

His manner, performance and appearance will come under close scrutiny. He must always appear in proper uniform which is kept clean, neat and well pressed. There is to be no smoking or gum chewing during the course of contact with the public. Dark glasses will not be used except under very special conditions.

But everything up to this point can be lost if the ranger doesn't

carry through in a pleasant manner. There are many intangibles in the makeup of a good public contact man and often persons with entirely different natures are able to perform the work equally well.

Certain essentials, however, are necessary in every man's makeup in order that he may be a real success in the important job of public relations. He must have a helpful attitude and show a genuine interest and liking for people. He must be friendly, courteous, tactful, and yet dignified in his manner. And finally, he must be able to carry through with the operational mechanics of the entrance mechanics of the entrance station smoothly, accurately and efficiently.

Let there be no mistake of the importance of the entrance station ranger's job. A heavy Service responsibility rests on him. The fact that seasonal personnel operate entrance stations for the most part in no way lessens the importance of this assignment. Rather, it is frequently a seasonal operation for which permanent rangers are not available.

Without a doubt the best guide ever developed for an entrance station ranger, or any other ranger for that matter, was written a number of years ago by Regional Director Elbert Cox of the Southeast Region. It was designed to aid seasonal rangers meet their responsibilities in public contact work.

IF I WERE A SEASONAL RANGER

I would always appear on duty in full uniform.

I would keep my uniform as neat and clean as my own person.

I would make a point of compliance with regulations so that not even a visiting Service man could find fault with my uniform; badge and name tag properly positioned; trousers pressed, or at least clean; clean tie; shoes shined; sleeves down, not rolled.

I would go out of my way to be courteous to visitors by answering all inquiries in a genial but straightforward manner; by silence when, obviously, remarks are not desired; by volunteering information to a visitor obviously in search of information but hesitant in asking.

I would study on duty or on my own time to learn the essential facts associated with sites, events, and persons commemorated in the Park.

I would keep a greater part of this information "on reserve," gauging the length of my remarks by the response of the listener.

I would acquaint myself with the physical features of the Park--roads, buildings, streams, boundaries--so that I could point them out on a map.

I would learn about the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and other national parks, and the establishment of the

Park here.

I would consider myself, when assigned to duty at a particular station, host to all visitors and a representative of the Service.

I would not greet a visitor or answer inquiries seated in a chair or reclining against a post; I would not greet a visitor, answer inquiries or direct traffic while smoking, chewing gum, or with a toothpick in my mouth.

I would not converse with a visitor from behind colored glasses, except when the glare of the sun made them necessary.

I would maintain so great an interest in my job that I would not be driven to read while on duty from true story pulp magazines.

I would learn all the regulations in effect at the Park and the extent of my responsibility in enforcing them.

I would determine what is required for a satisfactory rating at the end of my summer's employment and do my best to make that rating "Excellent."

I would have the personal satisfaction of knowing that I had done a good job, that I would be recommended for reappointment the next summer, and, if I ever had the good fortune to be considered for a permanent position in the Service, that my record as a temporary ranger would be the first material factor to recommend me for such a position.

I would conduct myself on the job and off duty as if I expected to do business and reside permanently in the community.

Working the entrance station is almost like being in a glass cage. Don't make the entrance station a congregating point for rangers in the district--on or off duty. The entrance is a place of business and it must present that appearance.

Being host to every visitor presents a big challenge--to the ranger it is repetitive to the point of becoming monotonous, yet it is a new experience to each visitor. We wish to make him feel that we have a special welcome for him--for he is the most important person in the park.

Remember he isn't an interruption of our work . . . he is the purpose of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him . . . he is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to serve him.

Be friendly in your approach. A pleasant and simple greeting, such as "Good morning" or "Welcome to _____" helps things get off to a good start and it doesn't take much time. This can be followed by a statement regarding the amount of the fee. At this point the ranger may encounter comments or questions which make background information on the fee system essential.

The fee system

The charging of visitor fees is a practice of long standing. Fees have been charged at Mount Rainier National Park since 1908; at Kings Canyon National Park since 1910 (then General Grant National Park); at Crater Lake National Park since 1911; at Glacier National Park since 1912; at Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks since 1913; Mesa Verde National Park since 1914; and at Yellowstone National Park since 1915. In 1915, a 7-passenger car paid \$10 for each trip through Yellowstone. In 1918, the fee was reduced to \$7.50 and then further reduced to \$3 in 1926. In 1953, the National Park Service established the 15-day permit system, which had the effect of applying the former annual rates to the 15-day permit and doubling the annual permit fee.

Throughout the years the charging of fees in the parks administered by the Service has been based on the principle that persons who use and enjoy the services and facilities provided in the parks should bear at least a portion of the cost of providing them, thereby reducing the cost to the general taxpayer.

The Congressional policy on fees charge is set forth in Title V of the Act of August 31, 1951 (P.L. 137, 82nd Congress) (65 Stat. 290). That policy provides that any service, benefit, or privilege furnished any person by the Federal Government shall be self-sustaining to the fullest extent possible, taking into consideration such factors as the cost to the Government, the value to the recipient, and the public interest served. All fees charged in the parks have been established with the objective of adhering to this policy.

There is no specific statutory authorization for the charging of visitor fees that is applicable to all parks. Implied authority for the charging of fees is contained in the Act of August 25, 1916, establishing the National Park Service, although there is no specific mention of fees in the Act. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorizes the charging of modest fees in the historical parks. The Service is precluded from collecting fees in two parks, namely, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace and Mount Rushmore by acts establishing those parks. Also, by the Act of March 4, 1929 (45 Stat. 1602) the Service is precluded from using any of its appropriated funds in any park where a camp-ground fee is charged. The Service is also precluded from collecting fees on the transmountain road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park by a provision of the deed transferring a portion of the road from the State of Tennessee to the Federal Government. P.L. 137, 82nd Congress, discussed under the foregoing paragraph, is the only statute that applies with respect to all of the visitor fees collected throughout the Service.

The basic considerations in determining fees to be charged in the parks administered by the Service are as follows:

1. No fees are to be charged in a park until it will be productive to do so, and adequate facilities and personnel have been provided.
2. Fees are to be fair and reasonable and fixed at levels that will not preclude persons from visiting the parks, particularly from the standpoint of aggregate costs to a family.
3. Fees are to be established in amounts that provide equitable differentials between the amounts charged in the various parks.
4. A single fee system is to be maintained to the fullest extent possible. The charging of multiple fees in a given park is to be avoided.
5. A differential shall obtain as between the amount charged a one-time visitor from a distant location and a frequent visitor from a nearby location.

All fees for areas administered by the National Park Service must have the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Like rules and regulations they must be published in the Federal Register for inclusion in Part 6, Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations in order to carry the full force of law.

Part 6 of Chapter 1, Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations is the essential source of vehicle, guide, admission and miscellaneous fees for areas administered by the Service. This includes automobile, motorcycle and house trailer fees for private vehicles; commercial passenger-carrying vehicle fees for those admissible to the parks under Section 1.36 of the General Rules and Regulations; trucking fees for certain specified parks; miscellaneous vehicle fees; guide and elevator service in caves; miscellaneous guide and elevator service; miscellaneous admission fees (some are for admission to the monument while others are to specific places, such as museums and other buildings (within the monument or park); wharfage at Salem Maritime; motor vessel transportation (Isle Royale); commercial fishing fees (Isle Royale); and hospital service (Mesa Verde)).

Objection to fee payment

Good judgment and tact are extremely important to properly handle objections, complaints or criticism over payment of the fee. They are generally made with honest intent even though in high indignation at times. The complaint must be received with courteous attention and without antagonism. Reply in a courteous but firm manner with an answer that explains briefly the "why" of the situation. DO NOT

BECOME EMBROILED IN AN ARGUMENT. Be fair and remain friendly at all times.

The Execution of the Transaction

Some of the permit types used in entrance station operations:

1. The permit pad--recording license numbers.
2. The cash register
 - (a) using plain roll paper stock which produces a printed permit--color schemes.
 - (b) using a preprinted permit which the machine validates.
3. "Idiot-rangers"

There is a strange paradox in this fee collection and permit issuing operation. On the one hand we say it is one of the most important visitor contact we make--and then in the next breath we try to break records in how fast permits can be sold--32 seconds a permit, etc. We cannot forget that fee collection-issuance of permits is only part of the job (the part that may capture most of our attention) but information to the visitor is equally important (and more so to the visitor) if we are to avoid being anything more than just another toll station.

Obviously the amount of information the ranger can impart must be gauged by the amount of traffic and the personnel available. Yet even under the most adverse conditions an impression should not be left with the visitor that we can't or don't want to help him.

As traffic increases we must turn to multiple-lane entrance station operation. Also, the development of information stations near entrances comes in for study and consideration. Frequently, placement of the information station as the first unit and along the entry road and then the entrance station allows the visitor to secure information important to his decision about visiting the area.

Lately there has been discussion of using women on entrances, relieving the ranger for other duties. There are many pros and cons. Women would undoubtedly work very well at information stations but would be less effective on entrances where law enforcement situations were likely to develop.

We cannot overlook the effect the manned entrance station has on park protection as well as visitor protection. The turning back of unsafe vehicles, possible detection of stolen vehicles and apprehension of drunken drivers are some of the tangible benefits to

visitor and park protection. There are many indirect benefits that accrue from this coverage that we may never be aware of.

This is the operation as seen by the visitor--but what about the operation as the man on the gate sees it?

Once he has completed the transaction with the visitor then he must be concerned with the accounting for the funds collected as well as permits and other stock that is on hand. Due to the handling of Government funds, all rangers assigned to such duties are bonded, generally in the amount of \$5,000. This bond is paid for by the U.S. Government.

The following is a general list of the various kinds of permits a ranger may have to issue:

1. Trip permits--(Shenandoah).
2. Single entry permits--such as admission or guide fees.
3. Fifteen-day permits comprise the largest segment of entrance permits for:
 - a. Automobiles operated for pleasure.
 - b. Motorcycles.
 - c. House trailers--under Section 1.40 (a) (2) defines the house trailer as a noncollapsible trailer specifically designed and built to provide sleeping accommodations for one or more persons. NOTE 1.40 (c) specifies that an annual permit does not confer the right to occupy any camping area for a period longer than that prescribed by the Superintendent.
4. Annual permits are also issued for pleasure autos, motorcycles and house trailers.
5. Commercial buses, which may be admitted to the park, may be issued a:
 - a. one-day permit.
 - b. quarterly permit (beginning January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1).
 - c. or annual permit.

While daily permits are frequently on a vehicle basis, quarterly

and annual permits charge on the basis of the number of passenger-carrying seats.

Of all the fees and regulations regarding vehicle entry, the most vexing problem is determining whether or not a bus is commercial or if the vehicle can even be admitted. This one area of entrance station operation causes more difficulty for the ranger than all the other aspects of station operation put together. Originally the regulations were prescribed for the protection of concessioners who held contracts or possessed preferential right to conduct bus operations in the park. We may eventually emerge from this situation.

6. Trucking fees.

- a. Noncommercial trucking fees, generally on a per ton basis.
- b. Emergency trucking fees (Yellowstone, Yosemite).
- c. Convoy fees (Zion).

7. Complimentary Permits.

- a. Complimentary Automobile Entrance Permit (GPO 16-70141-1) a yellow card with a green NPS emblem carrying the permittee's name on the face of the card and the identity on the back. (Not issued at entrances) Issued by Superintendent and other NPS officials to park cooperators and dignitaries in public office.
- b. Permanent Park Employees Permit (Form 10-53) is issued to permanent NPS employees for admission to other areas administered by the NPS. (Not issued at entrances, but by an official of the park to which they are assigned.)
- c. Gate Passes or other temporary complimentary vehicle permits are issued at entrances for infrequent entry by persons entitled to have the fee waived--person doing business with park on an irregular basis.
- d. Employees Motor Vehicle Permit--some areas issue permits to all employees, permanent and season, as a means of registering vehicles and checking drivers licenses. Stickers are sometimes used for these employees in order to speed recognition at the entrance. Ideally these should be numbered stickers corresponding to a file record of the permit.

The accounting of funds and permits requires that:

1. An inventory be maintained of all accountable stock on hand in the station and assigned to the ranger in charge.
2. An accounting of funds and permits in the possession of the man selling permits. A collection record and accounting procedure became more standardized on a trial basis in 1961 and then was adopted in 1962. Its form and specific layout will vary some with the kind of permits issued.

The new accounting procedures require provision of a cash box for each ranger thereby allowing him to retain custody of what he is signed and accountable for.

The next step is the preparation of funds for deposit. This duty, generally performed by the ranger in charge, completes the operation. The remitting operation is a very detailed but important procedure that is outlined explicitly at each area. It is important that station records are complete to show the receipt of permits, their sale and finally the deposit of revenues.

The handling of funds seldom can be executed without incurring shortages or overages. When shortages occur it is the responsibility of the ranger on duty at the time the shortage occurred to make up the deficit from his own personal funds. When overages occur the money must be forwarded to the Park's agent cashier with an explanation of how and when the overage occurred.

The Act of June 12, 1917, requires that all park revenues be deposited into the Treasury of the United States as revenues (Miscellaneous Receipt). The fees collected are not available for operating and maintaining the areas. They do, however, offset a portion of the funds appropriated for those purposes, thus reducing the cost to the general taxpayer.

Three exceptions have been made by the Congress subsequent to the Act of June 12, 1917. Yellowstone National Park is authorized to withhold revenues to cover the cost of operating the school at park headquarters; revenues from Grand Teton National Park are used to reimburse Teton County, Wyoming, for tax losses on lands transferred to the Federal Government which were formerly in private ownership; and Mammoth Cave National Park was authorized to use a portion of its annual revenues for the acquisition of privately owned caves within the park boundaries.

The sale of permits, the collection of fees and dispensing of information do not complete the duties of an entrance station ranger. Another very important task is the tabulation of travel figures. These figures must be kept current since many areas require the

forwarding of travel statistics to headquarters every day in order to have park-wide travel figures always up to date.

Computing travel brings the ranger into contact with several components of the travel picture. Some of these are:

1. First entry travel--figured from permit sales. Formerly, people were counted individually, but the trend today is to apply a factor of so many people per car. This factor frequently will be checked by the park's entrances each year during the operating season.
2. Re-entry travel--cars entering the park or monument after the calendar day on which the permit was purchased. As a general rule they will be counted only once each day although they may enter more frequently. Normally, employees are not counted as re-entry travel.
3. Other travel data results from traffic counter checks during periods when the entrance station is not in operation.
4. Frequently bus travel, commercial and noncommercial, is carried as an independent entry but included in the day's total figure and consequently as a part of the total travel figure.

Conclusion:

While the entrance station does not offer the variety of work that other ranger stations sometimes have, it has a very important role in the overall park picture. In addition, because of some of its inherent conditions it presents a challenging assignment to a ranger with initiative and drive. A job well done here makes a real contribution to the park's overall objective of helping Americans enjoy and appreciate their parks and monuments.